

UFO's make comeback

1972: monsters stole the spotlight

by John Keel

WOODSTOCK N.Y. -- AFTER a year lull, with comparatively few flying saucers being reported, the little green men attempted a comeback in 1972. But a seven-foot tall hairy monster with a serious perspiration problem walked away with most of the publicity.

He -- or -- it popped up in the little town Louisiana, Missouri, in July soon after several local citizens had allegedly seen strange lights in the sky. The critter was quickly dubbed "MoMo" short for Missouri Monster, and similar man-shaped animals accompanied by foul odors were soon being reported in neighboring states.

Several patterns are now apparent in UFO sightings. Dr. David Saunders, a psychologist at the University of Colorado, patiently fed 18,000 sighting reports into a computer and conformed earlier studies which contended that a surprising majority of all known sightings tend to occur on Wednesday.

In fact, the best time to look for oddball lights in the sky seems to be 10 p.m. Wednesday. The Martians, or whoever, operate to a regular timetable in many parts of the country.

Sightings tend to peak around the 10th and 21st of March, April, July, August, September and January. And an unusual number of sightings seem to occur on the 24th.

Worldwide

In April 1972, there was the annual outbreak of strange aerial phenomena in several states. By Midsummer, a worldwide wave was taking place. Airline pilots in South Africa reported weird object trailing their planes. New Zealand, the island off the coast of Australia produced a wide variety of unusual reports. But, then, New Zealand has a history of sightings going all the way back to the early 1900's.

Periodically, the UFO's (unidentified flying objects) dump their garbage on us and contribute to our environmental problems. Early in April, formations of bright objects were observed over Derry, Youngwood and Carbon in Pennsylvania. They dropped quantities of metallic strips composed of aluminum and silicon.

Such strips have been found repeatedly all over the world in the wake of UFO sightings. The good people of West Virginia call the stuff "space grass." It resembles "chaff" which Air Force planes deploy to deceive ground radar but is chemically different from the Air Force substance.

Back in 1963, two strange metal spheres, a few inches in diameter were found on a sheep ranch in Australia. According to official statements by the Australian Government at the time, scientists were unable to cut them open. Their purpose and origin remain a mystery.

In 1972, the mysterious spheres were back -- this time in New Zealand. They were about 14 inches in diameter and, when analyzed by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, proved to be made of titanium, a rare and expensive alloy . Both the Soviet Union and the United States denied that the objects could be pieces of their space vehicles.

Meanwhile, from Canada to Mexico there was a new outbreak of what early settlers called "fairy circles." These are perfect circles burned into open fields. Often, plants fail to regrow in the circles for years. Cows, sheep and horses carefully graze around them. Dogs won't even set foot in them. Once it was thought the circles were caused by freak lightning. But that theory has been disproven.

A rash of these circles appeared suddenly throughout Kansas and Iowa this past summer. They are usually found after strange aerial lights have been seen in the vicinity. Flying saucer enthusiasts regard such circles as physical proof of space ships from some other planet.

Holes baffle

In Iowa, something also punched three-foot wide holes in the landscape. They were filled with an unidentified silver dust. The holes turned up on farms at Goldfield , Story City, Laurens and Boone. Authorities were baffled.

In September, a strange spherical light even appeared over Hanoi in North Vietnam, triggering an air raid alert. Earlier, in June, policemen fired on a "ball of fire" near Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada.

Yugoslavia plunged into a UFO "flap" in October 1971 when astronomer in Croatia spotted and photographed a Pentagon-shaped flying whatzit. On October 13, 200 spectators at a football game in Sid, Vojvodina forgot about the game while they watched a white circular object cavort overhead. Sightings behind the Iron Curtain stepped up in 1972.

In France, a massive wave of sightings including reported landings in three widely separated areas, began on March 21.

Newspapers around the world were reporting flying saucers again with mounting interest. Dr. Jacques Vallee, a French computer specialist, released a study of hundreds of sightings and

landings collected in Spain. Among other things, he noted that the largest percentage of witnesses were under the age of 30, although a few 80-year-olds have also reported seeing objects.

While scores of amateur monster hunters and journalists were pursuing the hapless MoMo across the Southern States, members of England's Loch Ness Investigation Bureau were posted around the famous lake in Scotland waiting for Nessie to rear his ugly head. The Loch Ness season got off to a bad start when pranksters planted a dead sea lion on its banks on April Fool's Day. But Nessie obligingly put in a few appearances during the summer.

Americans don't have to travel all the way to Scotland to see a sea serpent, however. Several witnesses claimed they saw a gigantic creature of some sort in New York's Lake Champlain this year. The Lake has a history of monster sightings going back many years.

Sasquatch

In California, the legendary Bigfoot was reportedly on the prowl again. Randy Norton, 18 and Steven Gillespie, 22 said they saw the legendary hair man on October 6 while camping near Clear Creek in Shasta County, California. They described it as looking like a gorilla with rusty brown hair. When they tried to follow it, it ran from tree to tree, "almost like he wanted us to track him." Gillespie said.

Further north several different expeditions scoured the forests of British Columbia, searching vainly for Sasquatch, the Canadian equivalent of Bigfoot and MoMo.

And a new American expedition headed for Nepal on the border of Tibet to search for the celebrated abominable snowman. Like his North American counterparts, the snowman smells bad, stands eight to ten feet tall and is covered with hair.

Sea serpents, flying saucers and giant hairy men have long been regarded as jokes and folklore, but in 1972 science was beginning to take such things seriously and leading scientists began to participate in investigations around the world.

Scottish lairds are up in arms over the threats to Nessie and in the state of Washington it is now against the law to shoot at a Sasquatch. But it is still open season on flying saucers and little green men.

-- NANA *

*[The North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA) was a large newspaper syndicate that flourished between 1922 and 1980. Founded by John Neville Wheeler, NANA employed some of the most noted writing talents of its time, including Grantland Rice, Joseph Alsop, Michael Stern, Lothrop Stoddard, Dorothy Thompson, George Schuyler, Pauline Frederick, Sheilah Graham Westbrook, Edna Ferber, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway (who famously covered the Spanish Civil War for NANA).]

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